



Patrick J. Ward
Town Clerk
Linda G. Golburgh
Assistant Town Clerk

Town of Brookline

Massachusetts

Town Hall, 1st Floor
333 Washington Street
Brookline, MA 02445-6899
(617) 730-2010 Fax (617) 730-2043

March 5, 2021

Mr. Anthony Ishak
131 Freeman Street
Unit 3
Brookline, MA 02446

Dear Anthony,

Thank you for a copy of the warrant article you submitted related to the Town Clerk's responsibility for overseeing the election process.

First, we do not believe we need a resolution to be more proactive regarding election outreach. We are committed to making registering to vote and voting as easy as possible within the limits of the law.

Second, we would suggest this proposal be delayed until a next Town Clerk has been elected/appointed. You can meet with the new Town Clerk this summer to discuss these ideas as well as the potential cost, legal issues and ability to accomplish the goal of greater participation by voters.

By delaying your proposal and discussing your ideas with the Clerk you may be satisfied with a plan going forward. If not you could always put this on the Fall Special Town Meeting.

Third, the Legislature and the Secretary of State are in discussions about changing election laws including allowing, vote by mail, registration the day of election, expansion of early voting and other potential changes. We would expect those to be finalized and adopted in 2021.

Fourth, while we believe it is important to make all reasonable attempts to have citizens register to vote, we think it is just as important to have them actually vote. We currently have a population of about 60,000 citizens and over 40,000 registered voters. Given that some citizens are too young to register, college students and others live here for a short time and some simply have stopped voting for whatever reason we have a relatively high number of registered voters. While we constantly need to reach out to all citizens to register, we also need all voters to vote!

We believe that some of the issues being discussed at the State level may help but only time will tell what the final legislation will include.

In response to your specific goals we would suggest the following:

1. Providing mail in Voter registration cards to several public sites.

We do not think this would be a problem once Covid is under control. Currently you can register in person, at the Department of Motor Vehicles or Mass Health*, online or mailing in the registration card. I might suggest that the public safety building should not be included in the list. Further it would be nice to provide forms to the High School to allow students direct access to registration forms.

2. Provide mail in registration forms in the census. We have reached out to our vendor to see what the addition cost would be accomplish this and are awaiting a response. We currently mail out over 30,000 census forms so there would be cost to mail and cost to processing the extra forms that come back. This approach may be too broad a brush given the 40,000 registers voters we already have. We think a more targeted strategy would yield better results. A discussion with the Clerk could lead to a better result.

3. The Town of Brookline will provide absentee ballot applications with stamped envelopes. This has a cost to the taxpayers. Given you can currently register in various different ways for free and there is discussion about “same day registration” we would hold off on this until more information is available.

4. Provide ample multilingual materials. We agree that multilingual material needs to be expanded but we have not concluded the best way to target that material. Do we add one or one hundred languages? How much will it cost? What is the best way to reach those communities? This requires more discussion and investigation about how best to accomplish this goal.

5. Send out Robo calls and use social media – We certainly agree that social media can be expanded relating to election information. Our staff is planning a Facebook page and we can work with the IT department about other venues. The general town policy is that Robo calls are used for emergencies and other critical information so any use of that would need to take place at the Select Board/ Town Administration level. Our experience is that too many Robo calls makes citizens angry.

6. The town will conduct a geospatial voter registration and voting pattern study... We do not have enough information about the cost, technology and outcomes to comment at this time.

We are happy to discuss your proposal at your convenience but still believe the best course of actions is to delay this proposal for the reasons stated above.

Sincerely,

Jeff Nutting, Town Clerks Office

CC Select Board
 Advisory Committee
 Town Administrator
 Deputy Town Administrator

*Automatic Voter Registration

As of January 1, 2020, if you are a Massachusetts citizen conducting certain transactions through the Registry of Motor Vehicles, Mass Health, and the Commonwealth Health Connector and you do not opt out of registering to vote, you will automatically become registered to vote.

If you do not opt out of registering, you will automatically be registered to vote when you:

- Apply for or renew a driver's license
- Apply for or renew a learner's permit
- Apply for or renew a state ID
- Apply for Mass Health benefits online, in person, or by phone.
- Apply for health insurance through the Commonwealth Health Connector

If you do not wish to be registered to vote, or you do not wish to be registered at the address you use with the RMV, Mass Health, or the Health Connector, you may opt out of registering.